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“We are not angels from heaven that speak to you, but men, whom grace, and grace alone, has made to differ from you.”

St John Henry Newman, “Men, not Angels, the Priests of the Gospel” from *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* (1849).



A newly ordained Ukrainian priest celebrates his first Mass.

Dear Friends,

I realise that these days a priest writing about the priesthood could be met with suspicion, rejection, scorn, aggression – or his words may be taken with a large dose of irony. In the public’s perception, the priesthood is often denounced and derided as part of a power structure, a barrier to progress or a nest of abusers. Tragically, some priests have betrayed their vocation – shocking and scandalising us all. But we do not need such scandals to remind us that God calls fallible men to be mediators between heaven and earth.

Priests are at the heart of God’s “project” for the salvation of the world, and their role is irreplaceable. God touches those he has chosen and laid his hand upon so that the priest in turn can make God tangible for us. “You did not choose me, but I chose you...” (Jn 15:16). Priests are not there to carry out their own plans or carve out careers from themselves. Priests should hand over their entire existence to Christ and proclaim the words of their master. This is the deepest and most profound reality of the priestly vocation.



“Priests are at the heart of God’s ‘project’ for the salvation of the world, and their role is irreplaceable.”

recognised as sin, the path to healing is closed to us. This is a life-threatening condition for the soul, as when we are no longer aware of our sins, we cease to purify ourselves of them and to atone for them. Priests, as the representatives of Christ, have the mission of taking away the sins of the world – both in the confessional and in Holy Mass. So priests must always sanctify themselves. A pure heart grants us access to the Holy Eucharist, in which the entire life of God is enfolded.

Dear friends, our support for priests is among ACN’s most important “projects”. It is

a “project” designed to purify the world of sin and bring it in close contact with the love of God. This is why all priests need your prayers, your faith and your support. It was in this same spirit that Saint John Henry Newman addressed the faithful on behalf of all priests: “We are not angels from heaven

that speak to you, but men, whom grace, and grace alone, has made to differ from you... Oh then forget not those who have been the ministers of your reconciliation; and as they now pray you to make your peace with God, pray for them, that they may gain the great gift of perseverance, that they may continue to stand in the grace in which they trust they stand now, even till the hour of death, lest perchance, after they have preached to others, they themselves become reprobate.”

With my grateful blessing on you all,

Father Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



“God always has the last word in our lives”



Nicaragua: “Jesus, Jesus, come to me!”



Indonesia: Great joy at 40 years of growth and grace.



Indonesia: The Holy Mass is central to every mission.

For years now the five contemplative Albertine priests in Estelí, in Nicaragua, have regularly celebrated Holy Mass for the intentions of our benefactors.

Father Exequiel López López, the Prior of the community, writes: “The celebration of the Holy Sacrifice is our personal encounter with Jesus Christ, our divine redeemer. In doing so we participate in the difficult task of making the Kingdom of God visible in the midst of the hopelessness that seems to stifle our faith. By celebrating the Eucharist for the intentions of ACN, we are proclaiming that God always has the last word in our lives and in our history.”

At the same time, however, this young community could barely survive without our Mass stipends. After Haiti, Nicaragua is the

poorest country in Latin America. Moreover, the ruling regime here is increasingly hostile to the Church. The economic crisis and the pandemic have also made the friars’ lives more difficult. And so, this year they are again turning to us for help, and we are supporting them with your Mass offerings, to a total value of **£4,873**.

Father Exequiel thanks you in advance for the prayer intentions that you have entrusted to him and his brother priests and says, “We hope that the bonds that unite us in faith will be strengthened by this prayer.”

And in Indonesia, which with 272 million inhabitants is the most populous Muslim nation in the world, your Mass offerings are a vital means of help for priests.

Here, in this vast island nation in south-east Asia, the discalced Carmelite Fathers are this year celebrating the 40th anniversary of the mission they founded. The Carmelites first began preaching the Gospel here back in the 17th century, but their first two priests suffered martyrdom in 1638. It was not until 344 years later, in the year 1982, that two more Carmelite Fathers arrived here. Just seven years after their arrival they built their first formation house and welcomed 26 youngsters to study there. Today there are no fewer than 55 native-born Carmelite Fathers here, while another 89 young novices are undergoing formation. By now, some of these Indonesian Carmelite priests are already working as missionaries in

Japan. Father Mark Ture, their superior, is delighted and profoundly grateful. “We are convinced”, he writes, “that this remarkable growth is also due to the generosity and kind-heartedness of the benefactors of ACN, who have always looked after us and supported us. Your generosity and love are a sign of God’s love for these young priests in their training to become true Carmelites, ready to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel among the people of Indonesia.”

We plan to pass on your Mass offerings (to a total value of £18,900) to these Carmelite priests. So we will share in the joy of their 40th anniversary celebrations!

Where the bishop slept in a tent

There are 60 villages in the Chitsungo mission, the poorest parish in the Diocese of Chinhoyi in northern Zimbabwe. Many of the locals belong to the impoverished Doma tribe. This is truly a Church on what Pope Francis calls the margins of society.

about how the Church can support the young people there”, says the bishop, who is shocked by the sheer poverty he has seen.



Close to the people: Bishop Raymond and Father Walter.

Last Easter, Bishop Raymond Mupandasekwa visited the remote village of Kanyemba, where he spent five days sharing the life of these poorest of the poor. While there he slept in a tent. Most of the tribe are still hunter-gatherers who quite literally live from hand to mouth, entirely at the mercy of droughts and other difficulties. But their hearts are being touched by faith in Christ and his Good News.

The distances are vast – Father Walter Chenyika has to travel up to 90 miles or so (140 km) in dreadful road conditions, in order to reach the faithful. While his old car has finally given up the ghost after travelling almost 850,000 miles (1.5 million km). “But without a car, pastoral work is impossible here”, as his bishop anxiously reports. Which is why he is urgently asking our help for his priest.

On their journey of faith, they urgently need to be accompanied by a priest, who can also help them to gradually improve their material living conditions. “I have been thinking

We have already promised £24,700 for a vehicle that can cope with the challenging road conditions, so that the tribespeople in these remote villages will not have to go without consolation and help.

You are the heart – they are the hands and feet

Many people in Papua New Guinea are overwhelmed by the rapid changes in their society. Within just a few years they have been more or less catapulted from traditional tribal life right into the information age. Social displacement, crime, drug and alcohol addiction and domestic violence are often the result.

But the Catholic Church in the diocese of Wabag is focusing on the family apostolate and promoting a deeper understanding of the faith. A three-year programme has been established which, among other things, includes marriage preparation courses, family counselling, religious instruction for families and young people and training courses for catechists. Already it is beginning to bear fruit. “More people are now receiving the sacra-



“Jesus, change our lives!”

ments and taking an active part in the life of the Church. They are stronger in their faith, and their living circumstances have improved. They are beginning to show greater concern for children, the elderly and women”, says Bishop Arnold Orowae. This year he is again asking our help for this valuable programme,

and he assures us, “The benefactors are the heart of our mission, while we are the feet and hands of the work in God’s mission.”

They need £25,600. Would you open your heart to help them to bring the Kingdom of God to their people?



The Eucharist – medicine of immortality.

comforting the grieving and despairing night and day – and frequently even being the ones to bring the fallen soldiers back home to their loved ones. They are helping the women and children who have fled from the south and east of the country and whose husbands are still fighting to defend their country. And they are the first port of call for those who need aid. Father Vitaliy Herasymiv, diocesan bursar for the archeparchy of Kyiv and Halytsch, knows well that “many of them are living the whole time under great tension and stress. They have experienced terrible things. The priests are giving themselves completely to their people, but they too somehow have to find strength from somewhere.”

For a long time these priests will continue to be stretched beyond their normal call of duty. Auxiliary Bishop Radosław Zmitrowicz of Kamjanez-Podilskyj fears: “The worst consequences of the war will not be immediately apparent, but will follow later. The psychological, spiritual, physical and humanitarian consequences, and the consequences for the families will probably only become evident later. Healing is a process. God alone can heal these deep wounds. God alone can answer the questions as to why we are suffering in this way.” And he explains what Ukraine now needs above all: “Prayer is the most important thing. We need conversion.”

For priests and faithful alike, the celebration of Holy Mass is a source of strength and inner healing. From it springs the strength for reconciliation and interior conversion which Ukraine and the whole world so urgently need. Last year, at the Angelus prayer on the feast of Corpus Christi, Pope Francis declared: “The Eucharist heals because it unites with Jesus: it makes us assimilate his way of living, his ability to break himself apart and give himself to his brothers and sisters, to respond to evil with good.”

The priests in Ukraine are only too happy to celebrate Holy Mass for your intentions. And so, among other things, we have also promised Mass stipends for the 27 Greek-Catholic priests of the Exarchate of Kharkiv, which has been particularly hard hit by the war, for a total of **£13,600**.

This is not just financial help, as it contributes to the healing of the world. Will you help us?

“God alone can heal the wounds”

Ever since the beginning of the war, we have increased our help for Ukraine, and currently we are supporting 2,713 priests through your Mass offerings – to a total of around £850,000. Whatever they have, they share with the most needy, and in serving their people they push themselves to the very limits of their strength.

A priest in Ukraine is the first port of call in distress.



The “widow’s mite” is a reality in Ukraine today. Elderly people managing to scrimp and save 10, 20, or 30 cents from their meagre pensions as a Mass offering – whatever they can possibly manage to spare in the face of soaring prices. These are moving gestures of gratitude indeed, but they are not enough for the priests to live on. Consequently, they are urgently dependent on our help. Most of them are working round the clock, celebrating Holy Mass, administering the sacraments,

Confession in the underground: reconciling with God and our fellow men.



God’s love is manifested in tangible signs.

© Barbara Kravczynski

A country without God?

He tried to rob the Albanian people of God. From 1944 to 1985 the dictator Enver Hoxha imposed a Stalinist regime of terror on his country, brutally persecuting all religious practices. At the same time he built 750,000 defensive bunkers. For wherever God is declared dead, fear produces the most bizarre blossoms.

In 1967 Hoxha declared **Albania** the first atheist state in the world. A novelty, even for the communist-ruled countries, and one where countless priests, religious and ordinary members of the faithful suffered, and in many cases died, in camps and prison cells. Ever since the beginning of the 1950s ACN was a voice for the persecuted behind the Iron Curtain and found ways and means of strongly supporting them, at a time when barely anyone in the West even spoke about them.

By the time of the political changes in Albania in 1990 there were scarcely a couple of dozen priests left who had survived the times of persecution. Most had already been murdered or died as a result of imprisonment and torture. “He died from an executioner’s bullet”, wrote the historian Rudolf Grulich of the 74-year-old Albanian priest Stjefen Kurti, who was murdered in the Lushnja concentration camp “because he spoke over a child the words that are the oldest surviving monument to the Albanian language, namely ‘I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’” And 80-year-old Bishop Ernesto Coba was beaten to death in prison for having attempted to celebrate Holy Mass at Easter. Just two examples of the many who shared the same fate. One of those who survived was the future Cardinal Mikel Koliqi. He was arrested in 1946 and sentenced to forced labour in the malaria-infested swamp regions. For 40 years he suffered in the camps and prisons, while secretly passing on the Faith. He died in 1997 at the age of 94.

Sister Marije Kaleta of the Stigmatist Sisters managed to escape prison. For decades she was able to secretly baptise babies and bring Holy Communion to the dying, constantly risking her life in the process. Not until 50 years after joining the Order was she finally able to take her permanent vows. She died in early 2022 at the age of 92.

Today the people of Albania, in southeast Europe, can once again practise their faith freely. Christians make up approximately 38.6 percent of this Muslim majority country, while Catholics account for approximately 10 percent of its population of 3 million, in one of the poorest countries of Europe.

Without your help pastoral work would be well-nigh impossible. That is why we continue to ask for your help, so that the next generation can be deeply rooted in the Faith for which, just a few decades ago, countless unsung martyrs gave their lives.



Sister Marije Kaleta (1929-2022) stayed faithful to Christ through the times of persecution.



A thank-you letter from Nigeria

Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme of Maiduguri Diocese, which has been ravaged by Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram, sent us the following letter: *“On behalf of the priests, the religious and the entire lay faithful of our diocese, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude, thanks and appreciation to all of you. The Boko Haram crisis has led to the destruction of many church structures in our diocese. And through your support, we have been able to rebuild many of them. Be assured of our fervent prayer for all of you and your families. We pray that the Lord will bless all of you with enduring peace, joy and happiness. May the love, mercy, kindness and compassion of the Lord accompany all our benefactors and benefactresses all the days of their lives.”*



Thomas Heine-Geldern,
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

“The family that prays together stays together.” This saying, popularised by St Mother Teresa, frequently comes to my mind and I sincerely hope that we might all have the opportunity to experience the truth of it in our lives.

Yet what are we to do when, as our children grow up, our own families begin to drift apart, at least in a geographical sense? Does that mean the end of our shared prayer for the needs of the Church and the Holy Father, or of our imploring the intercession of the Mother of God for major decisions and events?

No, I do not believe it does! During the pandemic we have learnt that we can also use technological advances such as videoconferencing in order to be able to pray together. The Covid-enforced separation and the efforts to end the frightful war in Ukraine through perseverance in prayer have, in many places, led to spontaneous online prayer groups involving families and friends.

Let us also take advantage of this opportunity by getting involved in the growing ACN prayer initiative A Million Children praying the Rosary on 18 October this year. Let us pray together with these children for peace and unity in the world!*

My heartfelt thanks to you for your support, and especially for your prayers!

*www.millionchildrenpraying.org

Need, love and thanks – your letters

My pocket money for Ukraine

Dear ACN team, I'm an 11-year-old Catholic girl. I'm very excited about your fundraising campaign and so I've been saving up my pocket money for the last few weeks, as well as the money I sometimes get as an altar server, so that I can help the people in Ukraine and give them a little happiness. Keep up the good work!

A schoolgirl in Germany

Thanks for the great work you do

I am indeed very grateful. I greatly appreciate, as I am very sure my brother bishops in other mission countries do, the great work that you and your colleagues in ACN do for the Church in our territories. God bless and reward your wonderful work!

An archbishop in Nigeria

A prayer from one of our benefactors

Lord God, open our hearts, let the little door of our hearts be opened to your rays of love.

A lady in Portugal

A small ray, Lord God, is sufficient, for all who are in need of it. But once this ray touches a heart it ignites it into a fire of love that never goes out. Lord God, perhaps there are some who have built a wall around their hearts and need more than a single ray of your love.

A lady in Belgium

A grain of sand in the desert

I deeply appreciate your Mirror newsletter, in which I learn about the various needs of our sisters and brothers in Christ around the world. Your work is truly a blessing from God. “Love one another as I have loved you” – these words of our Lord aptly summarise your work. What little I can periodically send you is small and insignificant, like a grain of sand in the desert. Yet I will continue to send something whenever I am able. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for celebrating Holy Mass on my birthday! A greater gift than anything else in the world.

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

Our address: Aid to the Church in Need, 12–14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DA. Please use the Freepost envelope – it saves you money and helps us. If you give by standing order or direct debit or have sent a donation recently, please accept our sincere thanks. This Mirror is for your interest and information

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